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712 north of Gilgit, then the last Kashmir outpost
704 towards Hunza and Nagar, the Durbar had a force
• [705] of eight thousand men. I knew, what I was not intended to know, that the men were half starved, fed on the worst form of grain, the food-grain which ought to have been in the granaries having been fraudulently made away with, and that there was only a month's food for the troops on the Gilgit side of the Indus, and no carriage to bring on any more. The Durbar had poured hundreds of tons of grain into Astor, which was easy enough to do, but had left it to the local authorities to forward this to Gilgit, a task, with their then resources, impossible of accomplishment.

704 I have before described the want of system which
705 existed, so I was not surprised at what I saw *en*
[164] *route* and at Gilgit. Here I found the Kashmir regiments scattered all about the valley in orchards, a sensible enough measure, as they had suffered considerably from cholera, but without a semblance of military precautions being taken. The senior officers never visited their men, not once were the troops under arms during my stay, and I do not think they had ever been properly fallen in since they had left Kashmir. Some days after my arrival at Gilgit nine hundred men were despatched unarmed, without an escort even, and without one single superior officer, four marches back, to fetch up for themselves a month's grain. The day before I arrived the troops were issued a day's supply of good flour to disarm enquiry on my part, but, as a rule, their food was vile, and the men received nothing but two pounds of unground grain, absolutely no extras, not even salt.

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What could be done with troops so treated? The men were well enough, and, poor wretches, looked eagerly to my coming to relieve them of their misery. Some of the officers were keen, but peculation and corruption were rampant; the honest men, if they existed, had no chance, and the condition of the force was deplorable. K 704 705 [703]

If from the military point of view things were bad, from the civil they were no better. The Durbar was robbed by every official from the highest to the lowest; granaries that should have been full of good grain were empty, or full of rubbish substituted for a consideration, bribery and corruption ruled the land, disloyalty and treachery were in its high places. The man to send warning to the Hunza-Nagar forces, when after the capture of Chaprot they had advanced south and were besieging Nomal, the last Kashmir fort between them and Gilgit, of the advance of the Kashmir troops to its relief, was the Governor of Gilgit's right-hand man, Wazir Ghulam Haidar. Every one knew this, yet he was still employed and passed backwards and forwards between both sides, apparently the trusted servant of the Governor. A more villainous-looking scoundrel I never saw. He came one day, bringing the sons of the Raja of Nagar, who had come as ambassadors from their father, to see me. One of them had some years before been made Rá or Chief of Gilgit by the Durbar, the old line of chiefs having died out, and he having married the last surviving girl belonging to it. He had distinguished himself by bolting from Gilgit and leading the attack of the Nagar forces on Chaprot some months before. I thought D 661 D 662

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701 condition, mostly composed of worn-out old men or of boys, and half the force existed only on paper. I calculated that of all the troops fully seventy-five per cent. were unfit to serve.

705 A couple of days gave me time to consider what steps were most urgently required to put the fort in a proper state for defence, and to go into the most pressing question regarding the increase in the water-supply. On increased water-supply depended increased cultivation, and on this hinged the question of feeding the troops. An inspection of the available positions for a new and safer ferry over the Indus followed, and an afternoon's fishing at the mouth of a stream running into the Indus, where we got fairly good sport. The Indus itself was in high flood, and full of snow water, so we failed to move any big fish, but later in the year it would repay fishing.

A few more days saw us in Gilgit, where I spent a fortnight waiting for my stores and baggage, getting in to touch with the local authorities, and 701 in preparing for my visit to Hunza and Nagar. I 661 had received a letter while on the road from the Resident, asking me, in the name of the Kashmir Council, to receive a large sum of money which was being sent up, and to see myself personally to the payment of the troops. This was a fairly strong reflection on the honesty of the Kashmir official to come from the Durbar itself, and irksome though the 648 work was, I welcomed the opportunity offered. For me there were several advantages. The people of the country and the troops would see that money and power were on our side; that the Kashmir Government trusted us; that we were not above seeing to

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499 noitring lines of road along the cliffs between Gilgit and Bunji, and in laying out the approaches and collecting material for the bridge over the Indus.

000 My time was now fully occupied at Gilgit. The year before I had drawn up complete schemes for putting the postal and transport arrangements on a proper footing. Both had, of necessity, been shelved, and the matter had to be gone into again. The first difficulty was finally solved by including Kashmir in the Imperial postal system of India, the second by placing the whole of the commissariat and transport arrangements under an officer of the Indian Commissariat Department. These changes were not, however, carried out for another two years, and I had to struggle on as before.

661 On going into the question of supply I found
• 705 that the figures given me the year before by the Governor of Gilgit, with reference to the grain revenue, were incorrect. There was a deficit of over a hundred and forty tons of grain, no light matter with no surplus grain in the country, and a brigade of troops and a mule battery to feed. By dint of the most careful supervision the troops were fed, but at the beginning of June 1891 when the first crop was cut, I had but a week's consumption left in hand. It was most anxious work. My enquiries into the management of the grain stores—the whole revenue of the district was paid in grain—showed that extensive peculation was going on. After weeks of patient investigation, I found that the Governor's right-hand man was the chief culprit. I handed over the papers proving the case up to the hilt against this man to the Governor, who acknowledged his servant's guilt,

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but informed me that he would do all he could to prevent his being punished, and that, if necessary, he would spend five hundred pounds in Kashmir to ensure his acquittal.

The troops were now well and regularly fed so far as their grain ration went, but they received no issue of salt, clarified butter, etc., and I had another year's struggle with the Durbar before this was righted. In Kashmir the grain issue might have sufficed; the men could buy salt, ghi, and vegetables for a trifle, but these necessaries were ruinously dear and very scarce in Gilgit. We did our best for the men by getting up vegetable seeds from India and starting gardens for them, but this was merely a palliative. Every year, towards the beginning of spring, scurvy broke out, and the troops suffered seriously, until, when my cultivation had spread, I was able to check it by issuing Lucerne grass to the men to eat as a vegetable.

The investigation of the supply difficulty showed that for my next year's consumption I should require, in addition to what the Gilgit district supplied, a little over five hundred tons of grain to be landed at Astor from Kashmir, of which four hundred and eighty tons must come on to Bunji, and of this again three hundred and sixty tons to Gilgit. This was a terrible prospect with no mule road beyond Astor, and the serious result of the road contractors and their workmen not having crossed the passes became every day more evident. It was in no way their fault, but that of the authorities in Kashmir. The latter, however, were, I knew, heavily handicapped, owing to changes in the administration of the country, and to embarrassed finances.

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K 705 Feeling that the whole secret of supply for the Gilgit troops lay in extending cultivation, I had turned my energies to making water channels which would bring thousands of acres of waste land under the plough. To this end I had obtained the services of a company of Kashmir sappers under a most excellent and well-trained officer, Major Gokul Chand. His men were badly equipped, but willing, and he was a tower of strength. We had done a good deal towards improving the irrigation of the valley before I realised the full extent of my coming difficulties in supplying the troops. When I found out exactly how we stood I took off every available man from this most necessary work, and turned all my strength on to the still more urgent task of improving the existing tracks into paths fit for mule traffic. The necessity for this was evident. Over K [482] bad roads coolies can only carry a load of from sixty to eighty pounds, in addition to five days' food for themselves. After the first few days they begin to consume what they carry, and bad roads make short marches. Mules carry four and five times as much as men, and only eat twice as much. Roughly stated, that is the whole problem of supply over frontier roads.

K 712 Eighteen miles from Gilgit was the fort of Nomal, which the tribesmen had besieged three years before. D 487 For fourteen miles the road was fairly practicable for mules, but four miles were impassable in summer. In winter the road ran down into the bed of the river, and mules could use it, but when the snows began melting and poured their floods down the valleys the lower road became impassable, and only

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that the supply of the Gilgit force was in a bad way. How bad matters were I did not discover until I had crossed the passes. We crossed the Burzil in a heavy snowstorm, which entailed some danger and two days of extreme discomfort, and which boded ill for the troops coming up behind us, and for the transport on the road. The shelter houses on each side of the pass, the construction of which I had unavailingly urged, were not completed, and the lives of many men were in consequence sacrificed.

On arrival at Astor the full measure of my difficulties disclosed itself. The arrangements for the supply of the Gilgit force had this year been put by the Durbar into the hands of a great contractor in the Punjab, totally ignorant of the conditions existing on the frontier, and of the nature of the roads over which transport had to work. His arrangements had absolutely broken down, nine-tenths of the grain and stores were lying at Astor, eighty miles from Gilgit, and the contractor's agent was waiting my arrival at Astor utterly helpless. Again I was thrown on to my own resources, but this year the difficulties to be solved were greater than usual. War on the frontier was almost a certainty, and in addition to the Kashmir brigade I had to feed two hundred of our own men, a section of a mule battery, and some thousands of coolies. I spent a few days at Astor trying to evolve order out of chaos. I ordered Manners-Smith from Gilgit to Skardu in Baltistan to collect coolies and send them to Astor, placed an officer in charge of the transport, granaries, and stores at the latter

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705 place, and scattered others along the road to act as transport officers. All responded well to the calls I made on them, and in little over a month I had a sufficiency of grain and stores landed at Gilgit, at the expense of tremendous exertions on the part of officers and men, and of considerable suffering to coolies and transport animals. For the third year in succession I cursed the ignorance and mismanagement of the authorities in Kashmir.

000 Before leaving Astor I received bad news. The detachment of Gurkhas, crossing the Burzil in cloudy weather, had been caught in fresh snowstorms, and eighty men and coolies were seriously frost-bitten. Among the sufferers was their Commanding Officer, Captain Barrett. Many of the unfortunate men died, and many more were maimed for life. Having made the best arrangements possible for the relief of the sufferers, I pushed on rapidly to Gilgit, and was not altogether pleased with the news which awaited me there. There were fresh persistent rumours of an intended attack on Chalt, and the garrison of that post had been allowed to fall short of food supplies. Foreseeing the necessity which might arise for rapidly preparing flour for the troops, I had given orders for a number of water-mills to be constructed; not one had been built. However, if there were shortcomings on the one hand, on the other there was cause for
701 satisfaction. The two best Kashmir regiments, under
648 the careful instruction of my staff officer, Captain Twigg, and of Captain Townshend, now Lieutenant-Colonel Townshend, C.B., D.S.O., of Chitral fame, had made rapid strides, and were in fairly efficient condition.